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THOUGHTS.  
UPON  
HUNTING.

LONDON

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REPRINTED FOR MESSRS. TURNBULL & ASSER, IN JERMYN ST., S.W.  
BY GEO. FALKNER & SONS, 131 QUEEN VICTORIA ST., E.C.

THOUGHTS  
UPON  
*HUNTING:*

IN A SERIES OF  
FAMILIAR LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

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BY PETER BECKFORD, ESQ.

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—SI QUID NOVISTI RECTIUS ISTIS  
CANDIDUS IMPERTI: SI NON, HIS UTERE MECUM.

HOR.

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THE FOURTH EDITION.

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LONDON:

REPRINTED FOR MESSRS. TURNBULL & ASSER, 71 & 72 JERMYN ST., S.W.  
BY GEO. FALKNER & SONS, 181 QUEEN VICTORIA ST., E.C.

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THOUGHTS  
UPON  
H U N T I N G :  
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

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LETTER I.

Bristol Hot-Wells, March 20 1779.

*REMARKS* how little literature has been written upon the Sport of Hunting. I know not any writer, ancient or modern, from the time of Nimrod to the present day (one only excepted), who has given any useful information to a Fox-hunter . . . . There is not any branch of knowledge, commonly dignified with the title of art, which has not such rudiments or principles as may lead to a competent degree of skill, if not to perfection, in it ; while hunting, the sole business of some, and the amusement of most of the youth in this kingdom, seems left entirely to chance. Its pursuit puts us to greater expence, and also to greater inconvenience, than any other ;

yet, notwithstanding this, we trust our diversion in it to the sole guidance of a huntsman : we follow just as he shall choose to conduct us ; and we suffer the success, or disappointment, of the chase, to depend solely on the judgment of a fellow who is frequently a greater brute than the creature on which he rides. I would not be understood to mean by this, that a huntsman should be a scholar, or that every gentleman should hunt his own hounds. It is not necessary a huntsman should be a man of letters : but give me leave to observe, that, had he the best understanding, he would frequently find opportunities of exercising it, and intricacies which might put it to the test. You will say, perhaps, there is something too laborious in the occupation of a huntsman, for a gentleman to take it upon himself ; you may also think it is beneath him : I agree with you in both ; yet I hope that he may have leave to understand it.—If he follow the diversion, it is a sign of his liking it ; and if he like it, surely it is some disgrace to him to be ignorant of the means most conducive to it.

You will rally me, perhaps, on the choice of my frontispiece ; but why should not hunting admit the patronage

of a lady? The ancients, you know, invoked Diana at setting out on the chace, and sacrificed to her at their return : is not this enough to shew the propriety of my choice? At all events, I assure myself that you will approve her attendants, *Health*, and *Contentment*.

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## LETTER II.

*INTRODUCES the plan and building of Kennels, and after insisting upon absolute cleanliness proceeds to advise upon the situation.*

“ Upon some little eminence erect,  
And fronting to the ruddy dawn, its courts  
On either hand wide opening to receive  
The sun's all-chearing beams, when mild he shines,  
And gilds the mountain tops.”——

Let such as Somerville directs be the situation : its size must be suited to the number of its inhabitants : the architecture of it may be conformable to your own taste. Useless expence I should not recommend ; yet, as I suppose you will often make it a visit, at least in the hunting season, I could wish it might have neatness without, as well as cleanliness within, the more to allure you to it. I should, for the same reason, wish it to be as near to your house as you will give it leave. I know there are many objections to its being very near : I foresee still more to its being at a distance. There is a vulgar saying, That it is the master's eye that makes the horse fat : I can assure you, that it is even more necessary in the kennel, where cleanliness is not less essential than food.

My kennel is close to the road-side, but it was unavoidable. This is the reason why my front pale is close, and only the side ones open : it is a great fault : avoid it if you can, and your hounds will be the quieter.

UPON looking over my Letter, I find that I begin by recommending, with Mr. Somerville, a high situation for the kennel, and afterwards talk of a brook running through the middle of it : I am afraid that you will not be able to unite these two advantages ; in which case, without doubt, water should be preferred. The mount that I have mentioned will answer all the purposes of an eminence : besides, there should be moveable stages on wheels, for the hounds to lie upon ; at any rate, however, let your soil be a dry one.

You will, perhaps, think my lodging-rooms higher than is necessary. I know that they are considerably higher than is usual ; the intention of which is, to give more air to the hounds ; and I have not the least doubt that they are the better for it.

## LETTER III.

I KNOW Sportsmen who boldly affirm, that a small hound will oftentimes beat a large one; that he will climb hills better, and go through cover quicker;—whilst others are not less ready to assert, that a large hound will make his way in any country; will get better through the dirt than a small one; and that no fence, however high, can stop him. You have now three opinions; and I advise you to adopt that which suits your country best. There is, however, a certain size, best adapted for business; which I take to be that between the two extremes; and I will venture to say, that such hounds will not suffer themselves to be disgraced in any country. Somerville, I find, is of the same opinion.

---

“But here a mean  
Observe, nor the large hound prefer, of size  
Gigantic; he in the thick-woven covert  
Painfully tugs, or in the thorny brake,  
Torn and embarrass’d, bleeds: but if too small,  
The pigmy brood in every furrow swims;  
Moi’d in the clogging clay, panting they lag  
Behind, inglorious; or else shivering creep,  
Benumb’d and faint, beneath the shelt’ring thorn;  
For hounds of middle size, active and strong,  
Will better answer all thy various ends,  
And crown thy pleasing labours with success.”

I perfectly agree with you, that, to look well, they should be all nearly of a size ; and I even think, that they should all look of the same family.

—————“Facies non omnibus una,  
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum.”

If handsome withal, they are then perfect. With regard to their being sizeable, what Somerville says is so much in your own way, that I shall send it you.

“As some brave captain, curious and exact,  
By his fix'd standard forms in equal ranks  
His gay battalion, as one man they move  
Step after step, their size the same, their arms  
Far gleaming, dart the same united blaze :  
Reviewing generals his merit own.  
How regular ! how just !—and all his cares  
Are well repaid, if mighty GEORGE approve.  
So model thou thy pack, if honour touch  
Thy gen'rous soul, and the world's just applause.”

THERE are necessary points in the shape of a hound, which ought always to be attended to by a sportsman ; for, if he be not of a perfect symmetry, he will neither run fast, nor bear much work : he has much to undergo, and should have strength proportioned to it. Let his legs be straight as arrows ; his feet round ; and not too large ; his shoulders back ; his breast rather wide than narrow ;

his chest deep ; his back broad ; his head small ; his neck thin ; his tail thick and brushy ; if he carry it well, so much the better. This last point, however trifling it may appear to you, gave rise to a very odd question. A Gentleman (not much acquainted with hounds), as we were hunting together the other day, said "I observe, "Sir, that some of your dogs' tails stand up, and some hang "down ; pray, which do you reckon *the best hounds* ?" Such young hounds as are out at the elbows, and such as are weak from the knee to the foot, should never be taken into the pack.

I FIND that I have mentioned a small head, as one of the necessary requisites of a hound ; but you will understand it is relative to *beauty only* ; for, as to *goodness*, I believe large headed hounds are in no wise inferior. Somerville, in his description of a perfect hound, makes no mention of the head, leaving the size of it to Phidias to determine ; he, therefore, must have thought it of little consequence.

A GREAT excellence in a pack of hounds, is the head they carry ; and that pack may be said to go the fastest, that can run ten miles the soonest ; notwithstanding the hounds,



separately, may not run so fast as many others. A pack of hounds, considered in a collective body, go fast, in proportion to the excellence of their noses, and the head they carry ; as that traveller generally gets soonest to his journey's end who stops least upon the road.—Some hounds that I have hunted with, would creep all through the same hole, though they might have leapt the hedge, and would follow one another in a string, as true as a team of cart-horses. I had rather see them, like the horses of the sun, *all a-breast*.

A FRIEND of mine killed thirty-seven brace of foxes in one season : twenty-nine of the foxes were killed without any intermission. I must tell you, at the same time, that they were killed with hounds bred from a pack of harriers ; nor had they, I believe, a single skirter belonging to them. There is a pack now in my neighbourhood, of all sorts and sizes, which seldom miss a fox ; when they run, there is a long string of them, and every fault is hit off by an old southern hound. However, out of the last eighteen foxes that they hunted, they killed seventeen ; and I have no doubt, that, as they become more complete, more foxes will escape from them. Packs which are composed of hounds of various kinds, seldom run well together ; nor do

their tongues harmonize ; yet they generally, I think, kill most foxes ; but unless I like their stile of killing them, whatever may be their success, I cannot be completely satisfied. I once asked the famous Will Crane, how his hounds behaved.—“ *Very well, Sir,*” he replied : “ *they never come to a fault but they spread like a sky-rocket.*” Thus it should always be.

A FAMOUS sportsman asked a gentleman what he thought of his hounds. “Your pack is composed, Sir,” said he, “of dogs which any other man would *hang* : they are all “*skirters.*”—This was taken as a compliment. However, think not that I recommend it to you as such ; for, though I am not a great advocate for stile in the killing of a fox, I never forgive a professed skirter : where game is in plenty, they are always changing, and are the loss of more foxes than they kill.

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## LETTER IV.

I AM glad that you do not disapprove the advantage I have made of my friend Somerville. I was doubtful whether you would not have censured me for it, and have compared me to some of those would-be fine gentlemen, who, to cut a figure, tack an embroidered edging on their coarse cloth. I shall be cautious, however, of abusing your indulgence, and shall not quote my poet oftener than is necessary ; but where we think the same thing, you had better take it in his words than mine. I shall now proceed to the feeding of hounds, and management of them in the kennel.

I HAVE inquired of my feeder (who is a good one, and has had more experience in these matters than any one that you perhaps may get) how he mixes up his meat. He tells me, that, in his opinion, oatmeal and barley mixed (an equal quantity of each) make the best meat for hounds. The oatmeal he boils for half an hour, and then puts out the fire, puts the barley into the copper, and mixes both together. I asked him, why he boiled one, and not the other? He told me, that boiling, which made oatmeal thick, made barley thin ; and that when you feed with barley only, it should not be put into the copper, but be scalded with the liquor,

and mixed up in a bucket. I find there is in my kennel a large tub on purpose, which contains about half a hogshead.

You little think, perhaps, how difficult it is to be a good kennel-huntsman ; nor can you, as yet, know the nicety that is required to feed hounds properly. You are not aware, that some hounds will hunt best when fed late ; others when fed early ; that some should have but little ; that others cannot have too much :—however, if your huntsman observe the rules that I have here laid down, his hounds will not do much amiss. But should you at any time wish to *rencherir* upon the matter, and feed each particular hound so as to make the most of him, you must learn it of a gentleman in Leicestershire, to whom the noble science of fox-hunting is more beholden than to any other. I shall myself say nothing further on the subject ; for as your huntsman will not have the sense of the gentleman I allude to, nor *you*, perhaps, his patience, an easier method I know will suit you best. I shall only advise you, while you endeavour to keep your hounds in good order, not to let them become *too fat* : it will be impossible for them to run, if they be so. A fat alderman would cut a mighty ridiculous figure, were he inclined to run a race.

## LETTER V.

THERE is an active vanity in the minds of men which is favourable to improvement ; and in every pursuit, while something remains to be attained, so long will it afford amusement : you will therefore find pleasure in the breeding of hounds, in which expectation is never completely satisfied ; and it is on the sagacious management of this business that all your success will depend. Is it not extraordinary, that no other country should equal us in this particular, and that the very hounds procured from hence should degenerate in another climate ?

HAPPY climate for sportsmen ! where Nature seems, as it were, to give them an exclusive privilege of enjoying this diversion. To preserve this advantage, however, care should be taken in the breed : I shall, therefore, according to your desire, send you such rules as I observe myself.—Consider the size, shape, colour, constitution, and natural disposition, of the dog you breed from, as well as the fineness of his nose, his stoutness, and method of hunting. On no account breed from one that is not *stout*, that is not *tender-nosed*, or that is either a *babler* or a *skirter*.

I HAVE often heard, as an excuse for hounds not hunting a cold scent, that they were *too high bred*. I confess, I know not what that means ; but this I know, that hounds are frequently *too ill-bred* to be of any service. It is judgment in the breeder, and patience afterwards in the huntsman, that make them hunt\*.

\* Hounds which I had thought *stiff-nosed* for many years, I have seen hunt the coldest scent, when once the impatience of youth had left them.

## LETTER VI.

AFTER the young hounds have been rounded and are well reconciled to the kennel, know the huntsman, and begin to know their names, they should be put into couples, and walked out amongst sheep.

If any be particularly snappish and troublesome, you should leave the couples loose about their necks in the kennel, till you find they are more reconciled to them. If any be more stubborn than the rest, you should couple them to old hounds rather than to young ones ; and you should not couple *two dogs* together, when you can avoid it. Young hounds are aukward at first ; I should therefore advise you to send out a few only at a time, with your people on foot ; they will soon afterwards become handy enough to follow a horse ; and care should be taken that the couples be not too loose, lest they should slip their necks out of the collar, and give trouble in catching them again.

WHEN they have been walked often in this manner amongst the sheep, you may then uncouple a few at a

time, and begin to chastise such as offer to run after them ; but you will soon find that the cry of *ware sheep*, will stop them sufficiently without the whip ; and the less this is used the better. With proper care and attention, you will soon make them ashamed of it, but if once suffered to taste the blood, you may find it difficult to reclaim them. Various are the methods used to break such dogs from sheep : some will couple them to a ram, but that is breaking them with a vengeance : you had better hang them.—A late lord of my acquaintance, who had heard of this method and whose whole pack had been often guilty of killing sheep, determined to punish them, and to that intent put the largest ram he could find into his kennel. The men with their whips and voices, and the ram with his horns, soon put the whole kennel into confusion and dismay ; and the hounds and the ram were then left together. Meeting a friend soon after, “Come,” says he, “come with me to the kennel, and see what rare “sport the ram makes among the hounds : the old fellow “lays about him stoutly, I assure you. Egad he trims them : “there is not a dog dares look him in the face”.—His friend, who is a compassionate man, pitied the hounds



exceedingly, and asked, if he was not afraid that some of them might be spoiled? "No; d—n them", said he, "they deserve it, and let them suffer."—On they went: all was quiet: they opened the kennel door, but saw neither ram nor hound. The ram by this time was entirely eaten up, and the hounds, having filled their bellies, were retired to rest.

## LETTER VII.

YOU wish me to explain what I mean by hounds being *handy*. It respects their readiness to do whatever is required of them ; and particularly, when cast, to turn easily which way the huntsman pleases\*.

I WAS told the other day by a sportsman, that he considers the management of hounds as a regular system of education, from the time when they are first taken into the kennel : I perfectly agree with this gentleman ; and am well convinced, that if you expect sagacity in your hound when he is old, you must be mindful what instruction he receives from you in his youth ; for as he is, of all animals, the most docile, he is also most liable to bad habits. A diversity of character, constitution, and disposition, are to be observed amongst them ; which, to be made the most of, must be carefully attended to, and differently treated. I do not pretend to have succeeded in it myself ; yet you will perceive, perhaps, that I have given it some attention.

\* My hounds are frequently walked about the courts of the kennel, the whipper-in following them, and rateing them after the huntsman ; this, and the sending them out (after they have been fed) with the people on foot, contribute greatly to make them handy.

## LETTER VIII.

*UPON Illness and Disorders, opening with Dis-temper.*

THERE are few disorders to which dogs are so subject as the mange. Air and exercise, wholesome food, and cleanliness, are the best preservatives against it. Your feeder should be particularly attentive to it; and when he perceives any spot upon them, let him rub it with the following mixture :

A pint of train oil,  
Three quarters of a pint of turpentine,  
Three quarters of a pound of sulphur,  
Two ounces of sulphur vivus,  
Mixed well together, and kept in a bottle.

If the disorder should be bad enough to resist *that*, three mild purging balls (one every other day) should be given, and the dog laid up for a little while afterwards.—For the red mange, you may use the following :

Four ounces of quicksilver,  
Two ounces of Venice turpentine,  
One pound of hog's-lard.

The quicksilver and turpentine are to be rubbed together till the globules all disappear. When you apply it, you

must rub an ounce (once a day) upon the part affected, for three days successively. This is to be used when the hair comes off, or any redness appears.

SORE feet are soon cured with brine, pot-liquor, or salt and vinegar, a handful of salt to a pint of vinegar: if neither of these will do, mercurial-ointment may then be necessary.—A plaster of black pitch is the best cure for a thorn, in either man, horse, or dog; and I have known it succeed after every thing else had failed. If the part be much inflamed, a common poultice bound over the plaster will assist in the cure.—Hounds frequently are lame in the knee, sometimes from bruises, sometimes from the stab of a thorn: digestive ointment rubbed in upon the part, will generally be of service. I have also known good effects from a poultice of Goulard, changed two or three times a-day: it must be sewed on, the dog kept by himself, and muzzled.

## LETTER IX.

THE variety of questions which you are pleased to ask concerning the huntsman, will perhaps be better answered when we are on the subject of hunting. In the mean time, I will endeavour to describe what a good huntsman should be. He should be young, strong, active, bold, and enterprising ; fond of the diversion, and indefatigable in the pursuit of it : he should be sensible and good-tempered ; he ought also to be sober : he should be exact, civil, and cleanly ; he should be a good horseman and a good groom : his voice should be strong and clear ; and he should have an eye so quick, as to perceive which of his hounds carries the scent when all are running ; and should have so excellent an ear, as always to distinguish the foremost hounds when he does not see them : he should be quiet, patient, and without conceit. Such are the excellencies which constitute a good huntsman : he should not, however, be too fond of displaying them till necessity calls them forth : he should let his hounds alone whilst they *can hunt*, and he should have genius to assist them *when they cannot*.

WITH regard to the whipper-in, as you keep two of them (and no pack of fox-hounds is complete without), the first may be considered as a second huntsman, and should have nearly the same good qualities. It is necessary, besides, that he should be attentive and obedient to the huntsman ; and, as his horse will probably have most to do, the lighter he is, the better ; though, if he be a good horseman, the objection of his weight will be sufficiently overbalanced. He must not be conceited. I had one formerly, who, instead of stopping hounds as he ought, would try to kill a fox by himself. This fault is unpardonable : he should always maintain to the huntsman's halloo, and stop such hounds as divide from it. When stopped, he should get forward with them after the huntsman.

HE must always be contented to act an under part, except when circumstances may require that he should act otherwise\* ; and the moment they cease, he must not fail to resume his former station. You have heard me say, that where there is much riot, I prefer an excellent whipper-in to an excellent huntsman. The opinion, I believe, is new ;

\* When the huntsman cannot be up with the hounds, the whipper-in should ; in which case, it is the business of the huntsman to bring on the tail hounds along with him.

I must, therefore, endeavour to explain it. My meaning is this: That I think I should have better sport, and kill more foxes, with a moderate huntsman, and an excellent whipper-in, than with the best of huntsmen without such an assistant. You will say, perhaps, that a good huntsman will make a good whipper-in; not such, however, as I mean: his talent must be born with him. My reasons are, that good hounds (and bad I would not keep) oftener need the one than the other; and genius, which, in a whipper-in, if attended by obedience, his first requisite, can do no hurt—in a huntsman is a dangerous, though a desirable, quality; and if not accompanied with a large share of prudence, and, I may say, humility, will oftentimes spoil your sport, and hurt your hounds. A gentleman told me, that he heard the famous Will Dean, when his hounds were running hard in a line with Daventry, from whence they were at that time many miles distant, swear exceedingly at the whipper-in, saying “*What business have you here?*”—the man was amazed at the question. “*Why, don't you know,*” said he, “*and be d—d to you, that the great earth at Daventry is open?*”—The man got forward, and reached the earth just time enough to see

the fox go in.—If, therefore, whippers-in be left at liberty to act as they shall think right, they are much less confined than the huntsman himself, who must follow his hounds; and, consequently, they have greater scope to exert their genius, if they have any.

I HAD a dispute with an old sportsman, who contended, that the whipper-in should always attend the huntsman, to obey his orders (a stable-boy, then, would make as good a whipper-in as the best); but this is so far from being the case, that he should be always on the opposite side of the cover from him, or I am much mistaken in my opinion: if within hearing of his halloo, he is near enough; for that is the hunting signal he is to obey.—The station of the second whipper-in may be near the huntsman; for which reason, any boy that can halloo, and make a whip smack, may answer the purpose.

YOUR first whipper-in being able to hunt the hounds occasionally, will answer another good purpose;—it will keep your huntsman in order.—They are very apt to be impertinent, when they think you cannot do without them.



WHEN you go from the kennel, the place of the first whipper-in is before the hounds; that of the second whipper-in should be some distance behind them; if not, I doubt if they will be suffered even to empty themselves, let their necessities be ever so great; for as soon as a boy is made a whipper-in, he fancies that he is to whip the hounds whenever he can get at them, whether they deserve it or not.

I HAVE always thought a huntsman a happy man: his office is pleasing, and at the same time flattering: we pay him for that which diverts him, and he is enriched by his greatest pleasure\*; nor is a general, after a victory, more proud than is the huntsman who returns with his fox's head.

I HAVE heard that a certain duke, who allowed no vails to his servants, asked his huntsman what he generally made of his field-money, and gave him what he asked instead of it. This went on very well for some time, till at last the huntsman desired an audience. "Your grace," said he, "is very generous, and gives me more than ever I got from field-money in my life; yet I come to beg a favour of your grace—that you would let me take field-money again;

\* The *field-money* which is collected at the death of a fox

“for I have not half the pleasure now in killing a fox that  
“I had before.”

As you ask my opinion of scent, I think I had better give it you before we begin on the subject of hunting. I must, at the same time, take the liberty of telling you, that you have puzzled me exceedingly ; for scent is, I believe, what we sportsmen know least about ; and, to use the words of a great classic writer, Somerville, who, as I have before observed, is the only one that I know of who has thrown any light on the subject of hunting, says, I think, but little about scent. I send you his words : I shall afterwards add a few of my own.

“Should some more curious sportsmen here inquire,  
Whence this sagacity, this wond’rous power  
Of tracing step by step or man or brute ?  
What guide invisible points out their way  
O’er the dank marsh, bleak hill, and sandy plain?  
The courteous Muse shall the dark cause reveal.  
The blood that from the heart incessant rolls  
In many a crimson tide, then here and there  
In smaller rills parted, as it flows  
Propell’d, the serous particles evade,  
Thro’ th’ open pores, and with the ambient air  
Entangling mix. As fuming vapours rise,

And hang upon the gently-purling brook,  
There, by the incumbent atmosphere compress'd.  
The panting chase grows warmer as he flies,  
And thro' the net-work of the skin perspires ;  
Leaves a long—steaming—trail behind ; which by  
The cooler air condens'd, remains, unless  
By some rude storm dispers'd, or rarefied  
By the meridian sun's intenser heat.  
To every shrub the warm effluvia cling,  
Hang on the grass, impregnate earth and skies.  
With nostrils opening wide, o'er hill, o'er dale  
The vig'rous hounds pursue, with ev'ry breath  
Inhale the grateful steam, quick pleasures sting,  
Their tingling nerves, while they their thanks repay,  
And in triumphant melody confess  
The titillating joy. Thus, on the air  
Depend the hunter's hopes."

I CANNOT agree with Mr. Somerville, in thinking that scent depends on the air only : it depends also on the soil. Without doubt, the best scent is that which is occasioned by the effluvia, as he calls it, or particles of scent, which are constantly perspiring from the game as it runs, and are strongest and most favourable to the hound, when kept by the gravity of the air to the height of his breast ; for then it neither is above its reach, nor is it necessary that he should stoop for it. At such times, scent is said to lie *breast-high*. Experience tells us, that difference of soil occasions difference

of scent ; and on the richness and moderate moisture of the soil does it also depend, I think, as well as on the air. At the time when leaves begin to fall, and before they are rotted, we know that the scent lies ill in cover. This alone would be a sufficient proof that scent does not depend on the air only. A difference of scent is also occasioned by difference of motion : the faster the game goes, the less scent it leaves. When game has been ridden after, and hurried on by imprudent sportsmen, the scent is less favourable to hounds : one reason of which may be, that the particles of scent are then more dissipated : but if the game should have been run by a dog not belonging to the pack, seldom will any scent remain.

I BELIEVE it is very difficult to ascertain exactly what scent is : I have known it alter very often in the same day. I believe, however, that it depends chiefly on two things—*“the condition the ground is in, and the temperature of the air ;”* both of which, I apprehend, should be moist, without being wet. When both are in this condition, the scent is then perfect ; and *vice versâ*, when the ground is hard and the air dry, there will seldom be any scent. It scarcely ever lies with a north, or an east wind : a southerly wind

without rain, and a westerly wind that is not rough, are the most favourable. Storms in the air are great enemies to scent, and seldom fail to take it entirely away. A fine sunshiny day is not often a good hunting day ; but what the French call *jour des dames*, warm without sun, is generally a perfect one : there are not many such in a whole season. In some fogs, I have known the scent lie high ; in others, not at all ; depending, I believe, on the quarter the wind is then in. I have known it lie very high in a mist, when not too wet ; but if the wet should hang on the boughs and bushes, it will fall upon the scent, and deaden it. When the dogs roll, the scent, I have frequently observed, seldom lies ; for what reason, I know not : but, with permission, if they smell strong when they first come out of the kennel, the proverb is in their favour ; and that smell is a prognostic of good luck. When cobwebs hang on the bushes, there is seldom much scent. During the white frost the scent lies high ; as it also does when the frost is quite gone. At the time of its going off, scent never lies : it is a critical minute for hounds, in which their game is frequently lost. In a great dew, the scent is the same. In heathy countries, where the game brushes as it goes along, scent seldom fails.

Where the ground carries, the scent is bad, for a very evident reason, which hare-hunters, who pursue their game over greasy fallows and through dirty roads, have great cause to complain of. A wet night frequently produces good chaces, as then the game neither like to run the cover nor the roads. It has been often remarked, that scent lies best in the richest soils ; and countries which are favourable to horses, are seldom so to hounds. I have also observed, that, in some particular places, let the temperature of the air be as it may, scent never lies.

IN reading over my Letter, I find that I have used the word *smell*, in a sense that, perhaps, you will criticize.—A gentleman, who, I suppose, was not the sweetest in the world, sitting in the front boxes at the playhouse on a crowded night, his neighbour very familiarly told him that he *smelt strong*.—"No, Sir," replied he, with infinite good humour ; "it is you that *smell*—I *stink*."

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## LETTER X.

## CONCERNING HARRIERS

THE whipper-in also has little to do with him whom I before described ; yet he may be like the second whipper-in to a pack of fox-hounds ; the stable-boy who is to follow the huntsman : but I would have him still more confined, for he should not dare even to stop a hound, or smack a whip, without the huntsman's order. Much noise and rattle is directly contrary to the first principles of hare-hunting, which is, to be perfectly quiet, and to let your hounds alone. I have seen few hounds so good as town packs, that have no professed huntsman to follow them. If they have no one to assist them, they have at the same time no one to interrupt them ; which, I believe, for this kind of hunting, is still more essential. I should, however, mention a fault that I have observed, and which such hounds must of necessity sometimes be guilty of ; that is, *running back the heel*. Hounds are naturally fond of scent ; if they cannot carry it forward, they will turn, and hunt it back again : hounds that are left to themselves, make a fault of this ; and it is, I think, the only one they commonly have. Though it be certainly best to let your

hounds alone, and thereby to give as much scope to their natural instinct as you can ; yet, in this particular instance, you should check it mildly ; for, as it is almost an invariable rule in all hunting to make the head good, you should encourage them to try forward first ; which may be done without taking them off their noses, or without the least prejudice to their hunting. If trying forward should not succeed, they may then be suffered to try back again, which you will find them all ready enough to do ; for they are sensible how far they brought the scent, and where they left it. The love of scent is natural to them, and they have infinitely more sagacity in it than we ought to pretend to : I have no doubt that they often think us very obstinate, and very foolish.

HARRIERS, to be good, like all other hounds, must be kept to their own game : if you run fox with them, you spoil them. Hounds cannot be perfect, unless used to one scent, and one stile of hunting. Harriers run fox in so different a stile from hare, that it is of great disservice to them when they return to hare again : it makes them wild, and teaches them to skirt. The high scent which a fox leaves, the straightness of his running, the eagerness of the



pursuit, and the noise that generally accompanies it, all contribute to spoil a harrier.

I HOPE you will agree with me, that it is a fault in a pack of harriers to go too fast ; for a hare is a little timorous animal, which we cannot help feeling some compassion for at the very time when we are pursuing her destruction : we should give scope to all her little tricks, nor kill her foully, and over-matched. Instinct instructs her to make a good defence, when not unfairly treated ; and I will venture to say, that, as far as her own safety is concerned, she has more cunning than the fox, and makes many shifts to save her life far beyond all his artifice. Without doubt, you have often heard of hares, who, from the miraculous escapes they have made, have been thought *witches* ; but, I believe, you never heard of a fox that had cunning enough to be thought a *wizzard*.

WHEN the game is found, you cannot be too quiet. The hare is an animal so very timorous, that she is frequently headed back, and your dogs are liable to overrun the scent at every instant. It is best, therefore, to keep a considerable way behind them, that they may have room to turn, as soon

as they perceive they have lost the scent ; and, if treated in this manner, they will seldom over-run it much. Your hounds, through the whole chace, should be left almost entirely to themselves ; nor should they be hallooed much. When the hare doubles, they should hunt through those doubles ; nor is a hare hunted fairly when hunted otherwise.—They should follow her every step she takes as well over greasy fallows as through flocks of sheep ; nor should they ever be cast, but when nothing can be done without it. I know a gentleman, a pleasant sportsman, but a very irregular hare-hunter, who does not exactly follow the method here laid down. As his method is very extraordinary, I will relate it to you :—His hounds are large and fleet : they have at times hunted every thing ; red deer, fallow deer, fox, and hare ; and must in their nature have been most excellent ; since, notwithstanding the variety of their game, they are still good. When a hare is found sitting, he seldom fails to give his hounds a view ; and as the men all halloo, and make what noise they can, she is half frightened to death immediately. This done, he then sends his whipper-in to ride after her, with particular directions not to let her get out of his sight : and he has

found out that this is the only proper use of a whipper-in. If they come to a piece of fallow, or a flock of sheep, the hounds are not suffered to hunt any longer, but are capped and hallooed as near to the hare as possible : by this time the poor devil is near her end, which the next view generally finishes ; the strongest hare, in this manner, seldom standing twenty minutes. But my friend says, a hare is good eating, and he therefore thinks that he cannot kill too many of them.

HAVING heard of a small pack of beagles to be disposed of in Derbyshire, I sent my coachman (the person whom I could at that time best spare) to fetch them. It was a long journey, and, not having been used to hounds, he had some trouble in getting them along ; besides which, as ill luck would have it, they had not been out of the kennel for many weeks before, and were so riotous, that they ran after every thing they saw : sheep, cur-dogs, and birds of all sorts, as well as hares and deer, I found, had been his amusement all the way along. However, he lost but one hound ; and when I asked him what he thought of them, he said “ they “ could not fail of being good hounds, for they would hunt “ *any thing.*”

IN your answer to my last Letter, you ask, Of what service it can be to a huntsman to be a good groom?—and, Whether I think he will hunt hounds the better for it?—I wonder you did not rather ask, Why he should be *cleanly*? I should be more at a loss how to answer you. My huntsman has always the care of his own horses; I never yet knew one who did not think himself capable of it: it is for that reason I wish him to be a *good groom*.

You say, that you cannot see how a huntsman of genius can spoil your sport, or hurt your hounds. I will tell you how: by too much foul play he frequently will catch a fox before he is half tired; and by lifting his hounds too much, he will teach them to shuffle. An improper use of the one may spoil your sport; too frequent use of the other must hurt your hounds.

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